DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 320 426 FL 018 586

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TITLE Learning E.S.L. with Los Cumbancheros 1988-89. OREA Evaluation Section Report.

INSTITUTION New York City Board of Education, Brooklyn, NY. Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment.

SPONS AGENCY Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Apr 90
NOTE 23p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Bilingual Education Programs; *English (Second Language); Evaluation Methods; Federal Programs; High Risk Students; *Limited English Speaking; Music Theory; Native Language Instruction; Parent Participation; Program Evaluation; Second Language Instruction; *Second Language Learning; *Singing

ABSTRACT

The Learning English as a Second Language (ESL) with Los Cumbancheros project was developed through the collaborative efforts of several New York State Government offices, community school districts in the Bronx, and the private corporate sector. Its objective was to provide supplemental services to at-risk students of limited English proficiency to keep them in school. The project's vehicle of instruction was a bilingual chorus that rehearsed several times per week and performed regularly. Los Cumbancheros taught students music theory through ESL and Native Language Arts (NLA). Students gained knowledge of music theory and met both the project's ESL and NLA objectives. Attendance records indicated that students participated actively in the program. Additionally, parents expressed enthusiasm for the program and were appreciative of the concomitant parental activities; the Los Cumbancheros parental involvement objectives were also met. (GLR)

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OREA Report

EVALUATION SECTION REPORT

LEARNING E.S.L. WITH LOS CUMBANCHEROS

1988-89

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EVALUATION SECTION
John E. Schoener, Chief Administrator
April 1990

EVALUATION SECTION REPORT

LEARNING E.S.L. WITH LOS CUMBANCHEROS

1988-89

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LEARNING E.S.L. WITH LOS CUMBANCHEROS
1988-89

SUMMARY

- Learning E.S.L. with Los Cumbancheros was fully implemented. During the 1988-89 school year, students participated in a bilingual glee club which gave performances in and around New York City.

- The project met all its objectives: in English as a Second Language, Native Language Arts, and parental involvement.

In its first year of operation, Learning E.S.L. with Los Cumbancheros was funded by New York State Categorical Bilingual monies. In collaboration with the New York City Board of Education's Office of Bilingual Education, the New York State Office of Bilingual Education, several Community School Districts in the Bronx, and the private corporate sector, the project provided supplemental services to at-risk students of limited English proficiency (LEP students) in order to keep them in school. The target population consisted of 111 Spanish-speaking students in the fifth through ninth grades at six junior high and intermediate schools in the Bronx. The project also offered activities to involve the parents of target students.

The project's vehicle of instruction was a bilingual chorus that rehearsed several times per week and performed regularly. Los Cumbancheros taught students music theory through English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) and Native Language Arts (N.L.A.) instruction.

The chorus was developed in modules composed of approximately 25 students from six different schools. Each module rehearsed the same material three times a week.

The program was highly successful. Students gained knowledge of music theory and met both the project's E.S.L. and N.L.A. objectives. Attendance records indicated that students participated actively in the program. The chorus gave many performances throughout the year and received expressions of support and appreciation from their audiences.

Parents expressed enthusiasm for the program and were appreciative of the concomitant parental activities. Los Cumbancheros met its parental involvement objectives.

The conclusions, based on the findings of this evaluation, lead to the following recommendations:

- Borrow or rent vehicles to facilitate transportation to rehearsals and performances.

- Acquire telephones and postage stamps to assist in the project's efforts to involve parents.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This report documents the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment's (OREA's) evaluation of the Office of Bilingual Educations's program Learning E.S.L. with Los Cumbancheros for the 1988-89 school year. This program, operated by the Division of Multilingual and Multicultural Education (DOMME) of the New York City Board of Education, completed its first year of funding by New York State Categorical Bilingual Funds. Los Cumbancheros provided students of limited English proficiency (LEP students) with supplemental services in English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) and Native Language Arts (N.L.A.) through participation in a bilingual chorus and bilingual instruction in music theory. The target population consisted of 111 students in the fifth through ninth grades.

HISTORY OF PROGRAM

Members of Los Cumbancheros, a musical group founded by bilingual educators and musicians, proposed this project. The group had previously used music and voice lessons to work on native language development and E.S.L. with students. They were based at I.S. 139 in Community School District (C.S.D.) 7 and had performed successfully for many years. The group's founder and musical director was recognized as New York State Teacher of the Year by the (New York) State Association of Bilingual Educators (SABE) and National Teacher of the Year by the National Association of Bilingual Educators (NABE).

Encouraged by the results of its efforts over the years, the group had proposed expanding the chorus to include various sites throughout the Bronx.

SETTING

Los Cumbancheros operated in six intermediate and junior high schools in five C.S.D.s in the Bronx. The schools are in low-income areas with high concentration of Spanish-speaking immigrants, most of whom came from the Caribbean.

PARTICIPATING STUDENTS

The number of students in each of the six participating schools ranged from 11 to 23; the majority were in the seventh and eighth grades. (See Table 1.) Most of the students came from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. The majority had been in the United States for less than five years and had between four and seven years of education in their native countries. In several of the schools, students were newly arrived immigrants with minimal exposure to the English language. Twenty-five percent of the students were illiterate in Spanish.

Students came from low-income families with many problems, including homelessness and drug abuse. A number of students had been on the verge of dropping out when they began the program. Project staff noted that many students felt shy and left out because of language and cultural barriers.

TABLE 1

Distribution of Participating Students by Grade and School

Grade	IS 30	IS 52	JHS 98	JHS 113	IS 115	IS 139	Total
5	11	-	-	-	-	-	11
6	-	3	-	-	2	7	12
7	-	8	2	5	15	6	36
8	-	5	10	8	4	10	37
9	-	-	11	3	-	-	14
TOTAL	11	16	23	16	21	23	110*

*Data were missing on one student.

- Approximately two-thirds of the participating students were in the seventh and eighth grades.

STAFF

The staff of Los Cumbancheros consisted of a full-time project director, a music teacher, and two educational associates. Visiting musicians and two musical arrangers worked as consultants.

The project director had extensive experience in bilingual education and in music, held one master's degree, and was a candidate for another. She had founded the bilingual chorus and been its director since 1973.

The music teacher had two master's degrees, one from the Juilliard School of Music. He had had extensive experience both as a teacher for the New York City Board of Education and Juilliard, and as a freelance musician.

The administrative assistant had more than ten years' experience directing various neighborhood and housing development programs, working as a fund-raiser, and developing programs.

The visiting performers and arrangers had extensive experience and had worked with well-known artists, including Miriam Makeba, Nina Simone, Mongo Santamaria, Celia Cruz, Willie Colon, and Tito Puente.

DELIVERY OF SERVICES

Each site held one-hour rehearsals twice weekly, and the full group met for a three-hour rehearsal each week. Rehearsals included instruction in music theory and voice in both Spanish and English.

The project held workshops for the parents of participating students throughout the year.

REPORT FORMAT

This report is organized as follows: Chapter II outlines the evaluation methodology; Chapter III describes the project's activities and evaluates the attainment of its implementation objectives; Chapter IV presents the student outcome data; and Chapter V offers conclusions and recommendations based on the results of the evaluation.

II. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation assessed two major areas: program implementation and outcomes. Evaluation questions included the following:

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Process/Implementation

- Did the program select students for program participation according to specific criteria?
- Did the program recruit qualified staff?
- Did the project implement the instructional activities for developing English language proficiency as proposed?
- Did the project implement the instructional activities for developing native language skills as proposed?
- Did the project develop the cultural enrichment activities as proposed?
- Did the project offer the parental involvement activities as proposed?

Outcome

- What percentage of program students passed their E.S.L. courses?
- What percentage of program students passed their N.L.A. courses?

EVALUATION PROCEDURES

Sample

An OREA field consultant visited two project sites, observed two classes, and interviewed the project director and two school principals. OREA also provided the project with a student data

form for each participant, and received 111 completed forms from the project.

Instruments

OREA developed interview and observation schedules for the use of the field consultant, and data forms for students.

Data Collection

OREA interviewed school and project personnel and observed classes during the month of May. Program personnel completed student data forms at the end of June.

Data Analysis

OREA assessed students' gains in basic understanding of music theory and concepts in English and in Spanish by evaluating passing rates in teacher-developed tests in each language.

Limitations

Since all LEP students are entitled to receive bilingual and E.S.L. services, and no other students were receiving bilingual instruction in music threory and concepts, OREA was unable to select an equivalent control group. Instead, OREA evaluated the knowledge gained by the experimental group alone.

III. EVALUATION FINDINGS: IMPLEMENTATION

STUDENT PLACEMENT AND PROGRAMMING

Participating students were categorized as LEP on the basis of scores on the Language Assessment Battery LAB*. Prospective students auditioned for project staff, who assessed their potential to participate in a chorus.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Los Cumbancheros provided supplemental instruction in E.S.L. and N.L.A. through the teaching of music theory and voice.

English as a Second Language

Project staff taught students basic music theory and vocabulary, using English, during the rehearsals. Scales, intervals, time signatures, and basic solfege (use of sol-fa musical syllables) were touched on during lectures. Staff used E.S.L. methodologies to teach English lyrics and chants, rhythm exercises, and repetition to teach English intonation.

An OREA field consultant observed two classes in E.S.L. music theory at different project sites. At one site, an intermediate school in the Bronx, the consultant observed a class led by the project director and two professional musicians. A

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*The Language Assessment Battery (LAB) was developed by the Board of Education of the City of New York to measure the English-language proficiency of nonnative speakers of English in order to determine whether they can participate effectively in classes taught in English. Students scoring below the twenty-first percentile on the LAB are entitled to bilingual and E.S.L. services.

paraprofessional was present. The lesson took place in an auditorium. The teachers stressed group interaction and communicated with the students in English at all times. The instructors provided students with continuous feedback. The musical director required students to repeat English words and sentences many times, until they had perfect pronunciation. She used index cards and demonstrated by playing notes. Students answered comprehension questions about the songs, e.g. "What does the song title ('What Are Friends For?') mean?" Students also worked with a music theory manual, and the musical director asked questions on its contents. She emphasized vocabulary, pronunciation, and meaning. The students appeared to understand a great deal.

At another intermediate school, the project director noted that there were occasional difficulties finding a rehearsal room. The program had started late in the year, and space had not been allocated for it. The observed lesson included small group interaction and a question-and-answer session. The teacher used songs to practice word and sentence pronunciation. A professional arranger and pianist assisted at the lesson. Except for a brief interaction in Spanish, the lesson was entirely in English, and students participated actively.

Native Language Arts

Project staff taught music theory concepts and vocabulary in Spanish. They used a lecture technique, charts, and handouts. Topics included notes of the scale, solfege, and dynamics. The

staff provided students with materials on theory and lyrics as well as artists' biographies.

NONINSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Program participants gave a number of choral performances. The project involved parents in several project functions.

Musical Performances

During the year, the chorus participated in 23 performances throughout the city. These included concerts at the Somos Uno Educators' Conference in Albany, the celebration of Foreign Language Month (at John Jay College of Criminal Justice), the Puerto Rican Life Achievement Awards at the Brooklyn headquarters of the Board of Education, and a memorial service for the Board's Chancellor Richard R. Green at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Manhattan.

The project director noted the difficulties in transporting students from the six participating schools to and from scheduled events and the weekly collective rehearsals.

Parental Involvement

The program objectives for parental involvement were:

- By June 1989, approximately 20 project parents, representing the project sites, will have attended a minimum of four training workshops. These workshops will focus on providing LEP students with home/school instructional support in understanding basic music theory and learning lyrics in Spanish and English.

- By June 1989, 125 LEP students and approximately 20 parents will attend a minimum of four activities conducted by project staff in Spanish and English.

The project held several activities for parents. One workshop introduced parents to the project, another showed them the techniques Los Cumbancheros used to teach E.S.L. through music. The project also invited the parents to join the chorus at their performances. More than 20 parents attended training workshops and project activities. Los Cumbancheros met its parental involvement objectives.

The project director indicated that the project would be enhanced by the presence of a staff member hired specifically for the purpose of developing the parental involvement component. The lack of telephones and postage stamps for frequent mailings hampered higher success of the parental involvement component of the project.

IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS: OUTCOMES

Los Cumbancheros proposed objectives for supplemental instruction in E.S.L. and N.L.A. through the teaching of music theory and voice.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

The evaluation objective for the development of an understanding of basic music theory and concepts in English was that:

- By June 1989, 75 percent of the LEP students participating in the project will demonstrate an understanding of basic music theory and concepts in their second language, English, by reaching the passing criterion on a teacher developed instrument in basic music theory instruction.

OREA calculated frequencies for the number of students who passed their E.S.L. music theory course. Data were available for 111 students. Of this number, 101 (91 percent) passed the course. Los Cumbancheros met its E.S.L. objective.

NATIVE LANGUAGE ARTS

The evaluation objective for the understanding of basic music theory and concepts in Spanish was that:

- By June 1989, 75 percent of the LEP students participating in the project will demonstrate an understanding of basic music theory and concepts in their native language, Spanish, by reaching the passing criterion on a teacher developed instrument in basic music theory instruction.

OREA calculated frequencies for the number of students who passed their N.L.A. music theory course. Data were available for 111 students. Of this number, 100 (90 percent) passed the course. Los Cumbancheros met its N.L.A. objective.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In its first year of implementation, Los Cumbancheros successfully provided supplemental instruction in E.S.L. and N.L.A. through music education and bilingual choral participation.

The project met its objectives in E.S.L., N.L.A., and parental involvement. Students rehearsed regularly and gave performances in New York City and Albany. The personnel in participating schools, as well as the organizers of concerts and events where the students performed, commended the project. A principal at one of the schools noted that the chorus was unique, and he considered it a showpiece that served as an example of the creative potential of bilingual education.

Los Cumbancheros' staff were strong advocates of bilingual education. They also recognized that many of the students in the districts they served had special needs that could be addressed more succesfully by innovative, non-traditional methods.

The OREA field consultant observed that the staff showed great creativity in their interaction with students. Using music to teach E.S.L. and N.L.A. to at-risk students was a motivating and innovative approach.

The project had some difficulties. Because of delayed funding, the project hired the accompanying pianist late in the year. The late start-up also made finding rehearsal space at one intermediate school a problem. It was difficult to transport students from the various sites to rehearsals and performances,

and it would have been helpful for the project to have at its disposal its own means of transportation.

Initially, the project had some trouble implementing its parental involvement activities. The director felt that it would be useful to hire someone to manage this component of the program.

The conclusions, based on the findings of this evaluation, lead to the following recommendations:

- To facilitate transportation to rehearsals and performances, borrow or lease vehicles for that purpose.
- Acquire telephones and stamps to assist in the project's efforts to involve parents.